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UM group studying relationships offers free self-help programs

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MEDIA RELEASE

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UM GROUP STUDYING RELATIONSHIPS OFFERS FREE SELF-HELP PROGRAMS

Inadequate communication is the number one problem that couples consistently say they have, according to Joyce Hocker, associate professor of interpersonal communication at the University of Montana. Hocker says most other problems, such as child raising, work, time management and differing values, stem from problems in communication.

"Research shows that people who communicate will with each other have more satisfying, happy and healthy relationships," Hocker said.

Hocker, together with Phil Bornstein, UM professor of psychology, and six clinical psychology doctoral students, are part of a UM group called the "Relationship Studies Program" that is studying ways couples can improve their communication skills without working directly with a therapist.

Two programs, one consisting of two sessions and the other lasting two months, are being offered. The programs are aimed at couples experiencing problems in their relationships as well as those who "just want to make a good thing better." Both programs are free.

Couples participating in the short program will be given communication skills training, Hocker said. Those participating in the longer program will be given self-help communication exercises to take home and complete in privacy. Topics covered include negotiation, expression of feelings, working on problems with children, sexual enhancement, and listening.

"The benefits from working on communication include a lot less tension in the relationship," Hocker said. "People simply feel happier with themselves and their lives working through their problems instead of avoiding them."

Relationships--add one

Hocker said often people will give up on an intimate relationship before they will give up on a job. "And that's sad," she said, "because there really are things they can do to help."

Couples interested in volunteering for one of these programs should call Bornstein's office at 243-4623 at the Department of Psychology to set up an initial appointment.

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